Encroachment of forest land for Prawn Culture and Paddy Cultivation in Orissa

284. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the growing encroachment of forest land for prawn culture and paddy cultivation in Orissa;

(b) whether such incidents are increasing in mangrove forest area in Bhitar-Konika Sanctuary on the Orissa coast;

(c) if so, the steps taken to inspect the forest areas particularly the mangrove vegetation in the Bhitar-Konika Sanctuary of Orissa; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) According to the report of the State Government following steps have been taken to deal with the cases of encroachment:

(i) Demolition of embankments and gherries in some cases.

(ii) Referring the cases to Revenue Department and settlement authorities.

(iii) Cases have been registered against illegal prawn culture gherries and these are sub-judice.

India-China joint working group discussions

285. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the progress made in the ongoing India-China Joint Working Group discussions for implementing 1993 Border-Peace and Tranquility Agreement between the two countries;

(b) when was the last meeting of JWG held; and

(c) the outcome of discussions at this meeting relating to issues like boundary questions, Tibet and the reported supply of M-ll missiles to Pakistan by China?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R.L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) The Eighth Session of India-China Joint Working Group on the boundary question was held in New Delhi, from August 18-20, 1995. Discussions between the two delegations resulted in an agreement on the pulling back of four Indian and Chinese posts, two on each side, located in close proximity in the Sumdorong Chu Valley (Wangdung area) in the Eastern Sector. These withdrawals are without prejudice to the respective positions of India and China on the alignment of Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the area. The two sides also discussed other border-related issues, including settlement of the boundary question, clarification of the LAC between India and China and force reductions along the LAC.

(c) Talks at JWG-8 included discussions for working towards a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the India-China boundary question.

On Tibet, the Chinese side conveyed their views on the activities of the Dalai Lama and' his followers in India. In response, we reiterated our well known and principled position.

We reiterated our concerns regarding Chinese reported supply of M-ll missiles to Pakistan. Government are continuing to keep a watch on such developments and taking adequate measures to safeguard the security of the country.

Degradation of forests in the Country

286. SHRI SARADA MOHANTY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the growing degradation of forests in several parts of the country;

(b) if so, the steps taken to identify the reasons and save the forest and forest wealth from degradation and destruction; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): (a) and (b) As per the state of Forest Report 1993 of the Forest Survey of India there is an overall increase of 925 Sq. Kms. of forest in the country. This includes increase in the dense forest cover by 568 Sq. Kms. over the 1991 assessment of the forest cover.

However, the main reasons identified for the degradation of the forests in the country include illegal removal of fuelwood foddar, timber and other non-timber forest produce due to increasing biotic pressures of growing human and cattle populations on forests. Quarrying, mining, laying of transmission lines and certain other developmental activities and encroachments also result in degradation of forests. Forest fires, floods, droughts and lendslides are also important reasons of degradation of forests.

(c) The measures adopted to prevent degradation of the forests in the country are:

(1) Indian Forests Act, 1927 and Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 are in force.

(2) There is a check exercised by the Government of India on diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes under the provisions of Forests (Conservation) Act, 1980.

(3) Modern means of communications like wireless sets, fast speed vehicles etc. are provided to protective staff. Flying squads patrol sensitive areas to check illicit removal of forest produce.

(4) Joint Forest Management has been introduced in the country to allow people's participation in the management forest.

(5) Use of gobar gas and natural gas as alternatives to fuelwood is encouraged.

(6) Fuel efficient chulahs are introduced in the habitations surrounding forests.

(7) Massive afforestation programmes have been launched in different states to regenerate degraded forest areas.

(8) Wood substitutes and recycling of materials is encouraged to reduce pressure on forests.

(9) Awareness campaigns are organised to protect tree growth.

Scheme for construction of buildings in forest area in Kerala

287. SHRI JOY NADUKKARA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any request is pending before Government received from the Kerala Government for sanction to construct buildings in the forest area near Sabarimala, a pilgrimage centre in Kerala so as to accommodate the devotees staying there during night hours; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and by when a final decision would be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): (a) and (b) The State Govt. of Kerala has submitted a proposal for diversion of 115.60 ha. of forest land under the Forest